

Olmsted

Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks
P.O. BOX 9884, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98109-0884
SEATTLEOLMSTED.ORG FRIENDS@SEATTLEOLMSTED.ORG

Board of Directors

Jennifer Ott
President

Jim Gale
Treasurer

Susan Olmsted
Secretary

Doug Bayley

Eliza Davidson

David Dougherty

Aaron Luoma

Eliot Muetting

Andy Mitton

Theresa Neylon

Richard Piacentini

Jenifer Rees

Ben Streissguth

Bob Baines, *ex officio*

Kathleen Conner, *Ex Officio*

Board of Advisors

Jerry Arbes

John Barber

Susan Black

Joan Hockaday

Brooks Kolb

Donald Harris

Gretchen Hull

Douglas Jackson

Nancy Keith

Anne Knight

Kate Krafft

Sue Nicol

Carla Rickerson

Larry Sinnott

Virginia Wilcox

September 19, 2012

Sandra Pinto de Bader
Office of Sustainability and Environment
PO Box 94729
Seattle, WA 98124-4729

Dear Ms. Pinto de Bader:

We have reviewed the draft Urban Forest Policy Plan from the perspective of Seattle's historic Olmsted-designed system of parks and boulevards, and have a few concerns that we request be clarified in the final draft of the plan.

The legacy and heritage of Seattle's Olmsted parks and boulevard system is referenced on page 26 of the draft plan. However, despite this, the body of the plan appears to systematically ignore its existence and value to the community.

Without protecting these historic areas, the implementation of the new urban forest policy could unwittingly cause serious damage to the character and purpose of these historic treasures. Our concerns range from the broadest policy implications to specific design elements of individual parks.

Specific concerns:

- Page 7 of the draft plan maps the landmass of the city. The map delineates the current approved uses of each parcel (Single Family, Downtown, Major Institutions, Manufacturing, Multi-Family, Neighborhood/Commercial, Developed Park, and Forest/Wetlands).

On this map, many of the Olmsted parks and boulevards are not defined as "developed parks." Many are identified as residential or natural areas, and in one instance, a scenic Olmsted park is shown on the map as "mixed forest and water drainage".

Without specific identification of the Olmsted parks and boulevards in the plan, implementation of the urban forest policy could well result in significant denigration to their purpose and value.

- Some of these historic parks and boulevards were identified and designed by the Olmsted Brothers specifically because those areas provide panoramic vistas of the natural environs outside their boundaries. The Olmsted Brothers even designed the boulevards to assure an ever-changing view for the motorist or pedestrian to enjoy.

Again, no reference is made to these areas; hence we are concerned that the intrinsic value of these parks and boulevards will be lost. Protecting these areas for public viewing becomes even more important as the city's population increases and existing private viewing corridors disappear.

- The Urban Forest Policy should include specific language that reflects the fact that the Olmsted Brothers designed various parks with a mix of ornamental and native trees. Again, it is important that the Urban Forest Policy does not override the historic landscape designs.

We are very concerned that without more specific recognition and protection of these precious public spaces, the Olmsted Legacy will be erased by the new Urban Forest Management Plan. To ensure that does not happen, a committee of the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks would like to work with your staff over the next few weeks to accomplish the following:

1. Identify the Olmsted-designed and influenced parks and boulevards on the city-wide land use map on page 7 of the draft plan.
2. Within the parks system, identify those areas that the Olmsted Brothers chose specifically for their ability to provide residents with views of the water and mountains.
3. Develop language that assures the historic landscape designs of the parks will be protected.

Please contact me at jenniferott@earthlink.net or 206-719-7062 so that we can arrange a time to meet. We look forward to working with you to achieve this common goal.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Ott
President
Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks

cc: Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Christopher Williams, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Mark Mead, Seattle Parks and Recreation